

Dox, Hon. Peter M.

Speech on the Restoration
of Georgia - True Condition
of the South, &c. 1870.





Class E 662

Book D 75

391
929
SPEECH

HON. PETER M. DOX,
OF ALABAMA.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JUNE 6, 1870.

The House having met for debate as in Com- shall, with your permission and that of the
mittee of the Whole on the state of the Union— House, endeavor to show from my information

Mr. DOX said:

Mr. SPEAKER: What it is my purpose to say a right to speak, that no cause exists which
to-night will be in execution of a purpose is founded in justice or good sense for treating
formed shortly after the passage through this any one of the southern States—whether it be
House of the bill for the restoration of Georgia Georgia or Tennessee or Alabama—in a man-
to the place in the Union so long denied to that ner different from our treatment of every other
State. It was my purpose to have delivered State.

the remarks I shall now make upon the occa- I propose, therefore, to speak in the interest
sion of the consideration of the amendments of the State of Georgia and of the people of
made by the Senate to that bill. It is not the State which I have the honor in part to
necessary for me to say to you, sir, or to any represent. In so speaking, I shall say what
one now present, that causes beyond my con- I conscientiously believe to be conservative of
trol have prevented the action of this House the rights of every State and of the people of
and the action of the other branch of Congress every State of that Union which I have ever
upon that subject, now so long unjustly de- sought to maintain. It was truly said by one
ferred. of the sternest and most faithful of the early

Mr. Speaker, what I conceive to be the true advocates of free government "that an assault
theory of the relation to the Union which is against the liberty of one citizen should be
sustained by the several States under the Con- rebuked as an assault against the liberties of
stitution, which was made to perfect and to every citizen." With equal truth may it be
perpetuate that Union, compels me to deny, on said that whatever, under a constitutional Gov-
the one hand, that any State can voluntarily ernment, impairs the rights of any member of
withdraw from that Union, and, on the other, that Government, not only threatens to impair
to assert that no just authority exists anywhere but is a direct blow which strikes at the rights
to exclude any State from the Union for a day of all the members of such Government. So,
or for a single hour. likewise, in a union of equal States, having

Such exclusion, if enforced against a State, rights guarantied by the sanctions of a written
is wrong not only to the excluded State, but is, constitution, whatever of wrong or of injustice
as I believe, in violation of the Constitution. is done to one of those States, no matter under

When, therefore, Georgia applied on a former what pretense, must be regarded not only as
occasion for a recognition of her right to repre- violative of the Constitution, which is the com-
sentation in Congress I voted for such recogni- mon shield of all, but as a deadly assault against
tion without condition or qualification of any the very life of each in whatever makes the
kind. A like vote I gave in the case of Vir- definition of a free State.
ginia, and in the cases of Mississippi and Texas. Perhaps, for this statement of what were once
As I voted for the recognition of the unqualified respected as apophorisms of freedom the only
right of Georgia to representation in Congress commentary in some quarters may be expressed
on a former occasion, so I shall vote at this by a smile of derision, and, possibly, of con-
tempt. Many minds are so constituted that

It will not be my purpose, Mr. Speaker, in the baser passions, when habitually indulged,
the remarks to which I am about to invite the will become so strongly interwoven in the very
attention of members, to confine myself to the texture and frame of thought as to corrupt and
legal proposition of the right of the State of debase, and finally enslave it, so that, like the
Georgia to be represented in Congress. Fol- distorted vision of the eye which can see only
lowing the line of remark already pursued on obliquely the objects before it, it will accept no
this subject both here and in the Senate, I truth however valuable, but will spurn alike,

as no longer worthy of respect, the wisest maxims and the best lessons which have been learned in those long struggles by which was won whatever is worthy of the name of freedom, whether applied to Governments or to peoples. But it is the reckless and the indifferent who most need the admonitions of danger. Disobedience, the synonym of sin, in its largest sense is but the violation of law, whether human or divine, and is ever stimulated by repetition until strangled in the clutch of the vices to which it has given birth, it perishes in the catastrophe of a base and ignoble ruin.

The analogies of nature and of morals are replete with illustration of the truth that no wrong, however specious its disguises, will be permitted to continue so long that it will not at some time be adequately redressed. There is no doctrine better supported than that which insists on compensation for injury and retribution for evil. It is the doctrine of individual responsibility, and it is, as I conceive, applicable to all men in their largest aggregation, however expressed by the simplest forms of society or fortified by the powers which combine to make Governments. We may excuse ourselves for wrongs inflicted on others by the imputation of unworthiness, or even of crime, against those whom we select as the victims of torture. Disregarding the lessons of charity, which are alike the inculcations of wisdom and of just policy, we may hesitate at no extreme of rigorous and relentless penalty until we ourselves in punishing wrong may outstrip by our own offenses those of which we are the unappeasable or not the authorized avengers.

Because the penalty of death may be justly denounced against the most heinous crimes none can justly claim that such penalty can be rightly applied when preceded by protracted and ingenious torture. All lawful human powers have their limits, justly and strictly defined, if not by law, by the common conscience and by the judgment of enlightened minds. Those just limits are exceeded, as well by persistence in the imposition of penalties as by their severity. "Whip me, if I deserve it," says the school-boy; "but then stop, and give me a chance to do better." This is every true man's sense of justice, rightly administered. A disregard of the rule, so well founded, which it suggests will always make a revolt in the human heart. It will do more; it will excuse such revolt.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I appeal to the Representatives of the people, in whose presence I stand; nay, I go further, and I appeal to the people who make up the great and intelligent constituencies of these Representatives, and I ask them whether there has not been in the past legislation of the country, so far as the same has sought by persistent, protracted, and ever-varying penalties, to punish the great offense of the late rebellion maintained by

many people residing in different States of the Union, a great deal which would not bear the test of the just rules I have endeavored to express? Is there not, I ask, in the spirit of malice and hate which not here, so far as I know, but in quarters which imperiously seek to influence the legislation of the country, very much which, if listened to, will vindicate the justice and the truth of what I have spoken?

For more than fifteen years I have lived in the State which I have the honor in part to represent. When I first went among the people of Alabama I was received by them with all that cordial and generous hospitality which is ever most grateful to the heart of a stranger. I was welcomed as one who was entitled to be recognized as an equal among them in the pursuit of whatever was worth winning of character and of honors in life. Never anywhere before in my experience, or under my observation, had I received or seen more of kindness and generous treatment unreservedly extended by any people to one unheralded by large reputation or by reputation of any kind beyond that which an honest man ever carries with him, even though unaided by adventitious supports. I went to my then new home with the opinions, the habits, and perhaps with some of the prejudices of the people among whom I was born and with whom I had been reared. Not one of those opinions did I hesitate to express in every proper way; not one of my habits, so far as they determined my personal deportment, did I circumscribe or restrain; not a prejudice, if I had prejudices, did I surrender.

Educated in Democratic principles, though not always a member of the Democratic party, I avowed those principles. Taught to regard the Union of the States, and its maintenance by all the powers which could be exercised within the just limitations of the Constitution as the great conservator of peace and happiness to the whole country, I proclaimed myself its earnest though humble supporter. Taught, also, ever to regard the just rights of the States and their inviolable maintenance as indispensable to the preservation of fraternal feelings among the people of different States of diversified interests, springing from every variety of climate and production, and needing as a necessary condition of just development local legislation of a different though not incongruous or hostile character, I firmly avowed my purpose to maintain those rights and to oppose whatever threatened their invasion.

With such consideration and character as these opinions and a faithful attention to my own business gave me, I pursued the avocation to which Providence assigned me unmolested by any one, because I made it a duty then, as I have ever striven to make it a duty, to do injustice to no one, however humble, and submit to injustice from no one, however exalted. When the ambitious political leaders of the

South, stimulated by what I considered as unwarranted aggressions upon what had from the foundation of the Government been regarded as the peculiar and lawful institutions of those States, were striving by earnest efforts to fire the hearts of the people of my adopted State, and to compel them to attempt secession from the Union as a remedy for the wrongs with which they were threatened. I opposed those efforts to the extent of my powers. I believed then, as I do now and shall always believe, that the doctrine of secession was not authorized by the Constitution, that it was neither a right reserved to the States, nor in any sense the proper remedy for the wrongs to which any State or number of States was then exposed. And in this opinion I know that a large majority of the people of the district which I represent then concurred, and, as I believe, still concur.

With these opinions the late war, at its commencement, found me. I maintained them consistently throughout that long and unhappy struggle, and I maintain them to its termination in the triumph of the cause of the Union. As I foresaw and predicted that the abolition of slavery would be the logical, if not the necessary consequence of such termination, I also unreservedly accepted that consequence, and down to this moment I accept it, without respect to the sacrifices it may have imposed upon me personally. In justice to many an honest original secessionist—indeed it is my duty to say in justice to a large and controlling majority of the leading secessionists of the South, that they, too, accepted in good faith all that the war had accomplished, whether for the just maintenance of the Union, for the overthrow of the heresy of secession, or for the abolition of slavery. And, as God is my judge, I believe that at no time since the surrender of the armies of the confederacy has the thought been entertained or the purpose conceived by any considerable number of intelligent men, even among those who were original secessionists, which pointed in a different direction from that which I have indicated. If any such there be it has not been my fortune to meet them even in the confidence and unreserve of social life, and to that confidence I have been admitted by the people of the South as fully as I ever was by the people of the great and noble State of New York, in which I first saw the light.

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, the distance which separates honest men and brave men of opposite political parties is not so great as is often supposed. Much nearer together are such men than they themselves sometimes believe. A common sincerity of purpose, a common honesty, is and should be a much stronger tie of union among all honest men than any political, or than any religious tenet, except in those cases in which vital principles are involved.

A thousand times rather would I that honest men among my political opponents, and I have no doubt there are many such in the country, should be intrusted with the powers of administration in Government, no matter in what department, than that one of my own party, hypocritically professing its principles only as a cloak to cover his knavish purposes of self-aggrandizement, should be intrusted with such administration. If, therefore, after the late war, when meeting an original secessionist, one who believed in that heresy as a right, I had reason to think or to know that he had been honest in the profession of that belief; that so believing he had bravely and fairly fought for its maintenance, and that he had as bravely surrendered it when to fight longer was hopeless, all I asked of such an one, all, indeed, that any party or individual had a right to ask of such an one was, "Are you ready to support the Government of the Union under the Constitution which defines its powers, abandoning forever your doctrine of secession, and accepting in good faith the abolition forever of slavery?" If to that question he answered "Yes," I had nothing further to say, and, believing him to be an honest man, he and I were thereafter as brothers, who might differ, as all honest men may and sometimes do differ, on subjects presented for their acceptance or rejection, whether upon politics or religion, or upon whatever other subjects enter into the affairs of men or of nations.

It is, therefore, from my own personal experience, from my observations made with the best opportunities for observation, and from the experience and observation of others in whose judgment and integrity I confide, that I unhesitatingly assert that had the people of the southern States been received back into the Union in the spirit which these remarks indicate the war of the rebellion would by this time have been remembered and in all future time would have been remembered only as a struggle bravely maintained by people of different sections, contending for what each side regarded as its just and lawful right, and therefore its duty to support with whatever of resolution and power it could command. There would, indeed, have been many a widowed heart and many an orphan to be comforted; but "He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb" would have furnished in the kindly and fraternal tempers of the whole people, in the new life which, under the auspices of peace and love, would have been infused into all, many consolations which a legislation marked by a different spirit, and too often vindictive and cruel, has forbidden.

Even now, after an expenditure of untold millions of dollars most unnecessarily wasted since the war in the work of restoring to the Union, States which had never succeeded in leaving it: notwithstanding this great addition

to our overwhelming national debt made in the interest of imposture and wrong; notwithstanding the many falsehoods detailed with all the circumstance which ingenious malice or a base and ignoble ambition could conceive, imputing to the people of the South purposes which have never intermitted of hostility to the Union, crimes of the most flagitious character against Union men, whether living in the South or going to the South from other parts of the country; and especially imputing to the people of the South outrages of the vilest character against the poor colored man who never can find a better friend—one indeed who will feed him when hungry, clothe him when naked, or administer to him in sickness more cheerfully than will his old master; notwithstanding all these and a thousand other calumnies, the foundation and excuse of as many persecutions, if the national legislation shall cease to find its inspiration in the sources of uncharitableness and hate, my word for it in a very short time there will be a different condition of things, looking to the interests of all classes, white and colored, obtaining in the South than that which has obtained under the domination of the political adventurers who, going there from the Lord alone knows what remote corner, have had placed among them, by the aid of the Federal military power, official trusts which in the vast majority of cases they are utterly unable to execute with credit to themselves or with benefit to any one. Bad laws are being constantly enacted by the strange dynasties which govern in the South, while good laws are badly administered. Men are elevated by the votes of poor, ignorant, innocent negroes to the highest judicial positions who would not dare to aspire in any northern State to the office of a cross-roads justice; sheriffs are chosen who are incompetent to make an intelligible return of the service of process, and offices of all kinds, through all the grades of responsibility, are occupied by men utterly incompetent to the proper discharge of the commonest official duty. Indeed, incapacity and the grossest ignorance are the rule (to which there are exceptions, but *exceptio probat regulam*) among not only the inferior officers in my State, but with those of high judicial position; and thus is there generally violated a fundamental principle of Magna Charta, "That no man should be an officer of justice without knowledge of the law." And yet, with such a condition of things generally prevailing, with everything like official qualification branded and ostracised, it is expected that crime will not exist nor outrage be perpetrated!

Why, Mr. Speaker, the most orderly community of Puritans in New England would revolt in open rebellion against such a rule as is to-day imposed upon many parts of the South. If I should be mistaken in this it would be because among those who composed such com-

munity there was not to be found any of the blood which coursed in the veins of the heroes who withstood British tyranny at Bunker Hill, at Concord, and at Lexington. The picture I have drawn of the condition of the people in many parts of the south but faintly portrays the reality. The patient endurance with which it is borne excites alike my surprise and my admiration. For, with much of error to be atoned for—alas! bitterly and in humiliation atoned for—what has been already inflicted on that people and is daily inflicted—utterly surpasses not only my conceptions of the largest penalties for political offenses, but as I would in charity believe, far exceeds in its degrading results anything conceived by those who framed the legislation which, if pursued to the end to which it would logically lead, will certainly effect the utter ruin, in all the higher attributes of character of, it may be a sometimes erring, but always a brave and noble people. One of the most alarming symptoms of deterioration in any people oppressed and humiliated by prosecution is, to my mind, an uncomplaining submission to such prosecution.

A truly wise Government will sometimes punish, but it will never persecute.

I confess, almost with shame do I confess it Mr. Speaker, that no matter how vile may be the calumnies with which the southern people are pursued, no matter how successfully such calumnies are employed in invoking renewed persecutions by the instrumentality of hostile legislation against the people of my State and other southern States—I repeat it is with shame that I confess to a disposition to be silent under the recital of these calumnies and the avowal of such intended persecutions. It may be that we of the South have received so many shocks that our sensibilities have become deadened; that we are in the condition of the poor culprit, who, when broken on the wheel, was, after the first dislocation, utterly insensible to the supposed agonies of the next in the series of his tortures. If such should ever become the condition of the South, then will the white man of that unhappy section have become more despised in his bondage and more helplessly a slave than were the innocent and half-civilized race so recently panoplied with the great privileges and the greater responsibilities of freemen—privileges which white men were centuries in extorting from the iron hand of tyranny, responsibilities so momentous that that our ability to bear them with the largest benefit to ourselves and the smallest harm to others is still a problem needing the salutation of a larger experience than any which our history can furnish.

But I am met here by the charge of outrages of different kinds—all, all, it is alleged, the legacies of rebellion, all committed in the interest and in the spirit of rebellion! To this accusation of crimes, so far as their connec-

tion with the late rebellion is concerned, except as they are the necessary consequence and concomitant of the misgovernments which have been forced upon the southern people since the rebellion was suppressed, I give my distinct and emphatic denial. Every crime in the catalogue of offences occurring in the States of the South is in these days flippantly, and falsely as flippantly, attributed to the same spirit which invoked the late rebellion. The calumniator of States is entitled to an equal place in the calendar of infamy with that which is held by the destroyer of the liberties of a people. These, like other calumnies, have generally originated with and been kept alive by those who themselves make, and most need, the largest drafts upon the charity of their fellow-men.

A person who once held a judicial position was assassinated but the other day at Decatur, in north Alabama, by a personal enemy, to avenge a conceived or real wrong committed several years since; and behold! the telegraph was at once employed by one who occupies the place of a Senator to inform his colleagues of the crime, accompanied by the suggestion that it was committed in the interests of the late rebellion, and instigated by a spirit of hostility to the Government of the United States! For what reason a suggestion so utterly false could have been made I cannot conceive, unless it was that an excuse might be given for forging the chains which are to bind Georgia and Tennessee, and possibly Alabama, in a more humiliating bondage than which already degrades those once free and independent Commonwealths. About the same time, possibly on the very day in which this crime was committed in north Alabama, Colonel Winder was assassinated by a personal enemy in the hall of the court-house of Kansas City. About the same time, also, an honest German citizen of St. Louis was killed by an unknown assassin, in the twilight of the evening, almost on the door-sill of his house, and had I the taste which caters for and would make a catalogue of crimes I have no doubt I could find offences more heinous, the motive which prompted them considered, and more numerous, in proportion to the population, committed in most northern cities and States than are committed in the cities and States of the South, every one of which can, with just about as much reason, be called legacies of the rebellion, or imputed to the spirit of the rebellion, as was the murder committed at Decatur, or any other crime committed by southern offenders.

On the 14th of April last past a Senator from Indiana saw fit in his place in the Senate to characterize my State as the scene of outrages of the vilest character: and because murders had been committed in two or three counties he also saw fit to reflect upon the people of character and intelligence in Alabama by the imputa-

tion of criminal purposes generally, and especially of hostility to the Government and Union. A more unfounded accusation than this never was conceived or uttered. To prove this to be so I present to you the testimony of Governor W. H. Smith, the present Republican Governor of Alabama. Governor Smith, on the same 14th of April, possibly in the very hour in which the Senator from Indiana gave utterance to his accusation against the people of Alabama, issued a proclamation from the capital of that State, in which he says:

"The Executive avails him self of this occasion to express his gratified appreciation of the good conduct of the citizens of all the counties in which law and order have been maintained, embracing nearly all the counties and an overwhelming majority of the people of the State."

And I read only the other day a statement that his honor, the district judge of the Federal district of north Alabama, discharged the grand jury summoned to inquire into offenses committed in that portion of the State because as he said he was advised by the prosecutor for the people in behalf of the United States that there was no occasion for their services; and then, turning to the audience, the judge congratulated them upon being a portion of a community in which peace and order had obtained that he had known a community more worthy of commendation for peace and quiet and the observance of law and order than were the people of the district of northern Alabama. Coming as this did from a judge whose prejudices were, if he had any, not in favor of that people, I ask those who now hear me, and those who may read what I say, to give heed to these remarks, and to give them that weight to which the official character of their author entitles them.

Now, I submit the contradictory statements to the Honorable and to the country without a single remark. But I respectfully suggest that the Republican Governor of Alabama, living on the spot, is likely to know as much as any one in regard to the true condition of our people. I am also satisfied that he is quite as creditable a witness in any court as is the Senator from Indiana or any witness he has cited, though that Senator may be one of these exceptionally virtuous people who have the highest authority for reckoning themselves in the category of those who are permitted to throw stones at others.

Why, sir, only this morning I saw a letter from Colonel J. J. Giers, of Morgan county, one of the three counties of Alabama in which outrages have been committed, but not of a character to political character nor in any way connected with politics. Colonel Giers, everybody knows who knows anything about him, has always been a Union man and a Republican. And what does he say? Why, he says that Mor-

gan county is peaceable and orderly. And Colonel Giers also shows in his own case how untrue is the statement that a Republican cannot be outspoken and live safely in Alabama; for a stronger and more outspoken Republican and Union man I have never known.

But to my subject. Disobedience of law, of some kind, obtains wherever man may be. Unrestrained by the enforcement of adequate and just laws, crime, in its different degrees, is but the consequence and the corollary of disobedience. As I have already intimated, whatever of crime has since the war of the rebellion been committed in the South in excess of former years, or in excess of what occurs in any northern community, however peaceable, may justly be imputed to the worthless character, with rare exceptions, of the incumbents in office in the South. It is to me a surprising fact that sensible men should think that any other result than an increase of offenses could follow, when, by the disfranchisement effected by the punitive legislation of the country, it is a difficult thing to find any one who is not disabled from holding any local, judicial, or administrative office, however high or humble, from that of the judge down to the overseer of highways and the constable.

My remedy for much of the disorder complained of in the South is the immediate and unqualified removal of all political disabilities from all men everywhere to whom they have been made to attach because of the rebellion. Let this be done, and then, so far as my own district and State are concerned, I am ready to give the guarantee of what character I have for intelligence or for patriotism that while restoring to our best men and ablest statesmen the privileges and the powers of administration in public affairs, in the affairs of government, both State and national, we may reasonably expect, and can justly exact from them, that which now can be neither reasonably nor justly expected, to wit, an accountability for crimes which it is not now in their power either to prevent or to punish.

Mr. Speaker, I trust that whatever opinions may be entertained by others on the subject which has suggested the remarks I have made on one will doubt that in what I have said I have expressed my honest convictions. I have little fondness for mere speech-making by any one; and I trust that the reserve which I have maintained in that respect since I became a member of the House will sufficiently attest my reluctance personally to participate in such displays. Whatever others may do, I cannot afford to speak in the interest of party alone, and for mere party advancement. On the subject which is now before us for consideration I profess to speak not only in the cause of Georgia, but in the cause of my State and people, in behalf of other southern States and their people, and in the interest of the people of the whole country. I should cease to respect my-

self—the worst calamity which can befall any man—if on such a subject as that to which I am inviting the attention of the country I should say aught which could be rightly charged as springing from any other motive than an earnest desire to further the cause of truth, of justice, and of peace.

But it is often said that because no rebel has been executed, therefore no Government ever treated with such clemency, with such magnanimity those who had unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow it as our Government had treated those who were in arms against it in the late unhappy struggle. Admit this to be the case, has not every other Government which punished with vindictive severity those who committed the offense of rebellion against its authority always had reason to regret the exercise of such severity? Can a single instance be cited from the pages of history in which such severity is recorded, where experience has not shown that it was not unsupported by what a wise policy would dictate, and the highest statesmanship approve? Has not the judgment of mankind stamped with its reprobation every such instance of vindictiveness as alike inhuman and unwise? Why then, in this day of what is claimed to be an advanced civilization, in this time when benevolence and charity are claimed to have asserted their ascendancy in the hearts and minds of men and women, assume so much credit for magnanimity because a few hundred, more or less, of the leaders of the late rebellion were not executed upon the gibbet and their families made beggars by the avenging edicts of the conqueror?

It needs but little reflection to determine that such boasting is alike ill-timed and foolish. I give it, however, as my candid opinion that had the principal offenders in the late rebellion been unwisely executed there would not have been half the provocation for complaint nor a tithe of the irritation in the dispositions of the great mass of the southern people which has been caused by what they justly regard as the persecutions which they have been indiscriminately pursued since the suppression of the rebellion. If the administrations in power since the rebellion had punished and not persecuted the peace which our President invoked at his inauguration would long since have been assured everywhere in the South. Not that I concede that dispositions unfriendly to the Government rightly administered exist to any considerable degree in the southern States, but I allege that wherever found they are the result of causes to which I have alluded, originating since the war, and marking the mistaken policy of reconstruction so far as it has been followed by acts of proscription, disfranchisements, and similar penalties, those legacies of arbitrary Governments of other days whose examples, instead of being followed, should only furnish for our admonition illustrations alike of the folly and weakness of their supporters.

It would, indeed, be a remarkable thing if, Grant, to whom, under Providence, was assigned the command of the armies of the Union, besides all the other good things which conquered the rebellion did for the southern States that I loved the opportunity of calling from the and people, it should have killed or reformed military prisons of the North, in anticipation all offenders against the law! And yet some of the general order for their release, many a our indignant patriots at the other end of the brave contented soldier-boy, the victim per- Capitol, and possibly some here, seem to pro- perhaps of an inexorable conscription, and of their ceed on the assumption that such a result was restoring to more than one widowed heart its expected, for they certainly must believe that idol and its only remaining place, and of giv- almost every crime and every outrage commit- ing back to more than one poor old father, ted in the South would not have occurred but- stricken by the infirmities of many years and for the rebellion. How many murders and oppressed by the heavier weight of sorrow, his other great crimes have been committed from young to, perhaps, only on the staff of his the basest motives in New England since the declining days, which were again to be glad- overthrow of the rebellion? How many such denied by the assurance that he whom he best offenses are daily committed in New York, in loved had been spared to close his eyes in that Chicago, in Cincinnati, in St. Louis, and other- leep which we all feel, however vainly, cannot great cities of the country! And yet it would but need the watchful tenderness and the justly subject me to derision if I were to im- kindly ministrations of natural affection. pute these offenses to the teachings of the But, turning from this not unpleasant dis- dominant political parties of the places in which- gression, made for the sake of the homage they occur. So should sensible men seem to believe the lying imputations which would as- by magnanimous means, I come back to my sign offenses in the South as a general thing to subject. Believing, Representatives of the peo- causes other than those which are everywhere- ple, that, by all the considerations of a sound operative in inducing to such offenses.

An announcement was made the other day, I trust, Mr. Speaker, with some authority, that the distinguished soldier who occupies the ex- ecutive chair of the nation would, in a contin- gency likely soon to occur, to wit, the restora- tion of the last of the too long excluded States to its proper place in the Union, communicate to Congress his recommendation of universal and unqualified amnesty to all persons to whom disabilities attach by reason of complicity with the rebellion.

I trust, I believe, that this prediction will have a speedy fulfillment. I believe it because such recommendation would be characteristic of the magnanimous spirit which conceived and executed the armistice of Appomattox. I believe it because I know that the distinguished person to whom I refer delights, when permitted to follow the impulses of his generous heart, in deeds of mercy and charity. And although I am justly reckoned among his political oppo- nents, I here in the presence of the Representa- tives of the nation acknowledge the sentiments of gratitude which I shall ever feel and would with unfeigned grief be forced to abandon for the many opportunities which through his in- terposition were afforded me during the late struggle of averting the asperities of war from more than one stricken household: of causing joy to be felt by more than one heart to which it had long been a stranger, and of dimming by the smile of happiness more than one face which had long been disfigured by the pallor of an almost hopeless sorrow. He and I may, by the future antagonisms of political sentiments and opposing policies, be long and widely sepa- rated. But never can I forget, never can I cease to cherish among the dearest treasures of my heart the memory that it was to Ulysses S. Grant, with much of their ancient affection, and

signed the command of the armies of the Union, besides all the other good things which con- quered the rebellion did for the southern States that I loved the opportunity of calling from the and people, it should have killed or reformed military prisons of the North, in anticipation all offenders against the law! And yet some of the general order for their release, many a our indignant patriots at the other end of the brave contented soldier-boy, the victim per- Capitol, and possibly some here, seem to pro- perhaps of an inexorable conscription, and of their ceed on the assumption that such a result was restoring to more than one widowed heart its expected, for they certainly must believe that idol and its only remaining place, and of giv- almost every crime and every outrage commit- ing back to more than one poor old father, ted in the South would not have occurred but- stricken by the infirmities of many years and for the rebellion. How many murders and oppressed by the heavier weight of sorrow, his other great crimes have been committed from young to, perhaps, only on the staff of his the basest motives in New England since the declining days, which were again to be glad- overthrow of the rebellion? How many such denied by the assurance that he whom he best offenses are daily committed in New York, in loved had been spared to close his eyes in that Chicago, in Cincinnati, in St. Louis, and other- leep which we all feel, however vainly, cannot great cities of the country! And yet it would but need the watchful tenderness and the justly subject me to derision if I were to im- kindly ministrations of natural affection. pute these offenses to the teachings of the But, turning from this not unpleasant dis- gression, made for the sake of the homage which I but due to generous action prompted believe the lying imputations which would as- by magnanimous means, I come back to my subject. Believing, Representatives of the peo- ple, that, by all the considerations of a sound policy, in the interest of mercy and of justice the heavy hand of power which now oppresses the people whom I represent should be lifted; believing, as earnestly as I believe the articles of that religious faith which I profess, that this can be done with safety and the amplest security for all interest and all classes in the South, for the white man and for the black man; knowing, as I do, that the wrongs which are told you of wrong and outrage are, most of them, the basest of crimes, and when true are assignable to causes for whose existence no just responsibility can attach to the individual or the character of the South, I beg, I implore you to unshackle that intelligence, to unloosen the chains which, if not removed, will, I fear, leave in the South nothing worthy of the name of character. Do this, and soon again will that inviting and richly endowed State which has given me a home more than recover, not only in her material interests, but in her moral aspects, all that she had lost by the mistakes, or, if you please, by the folly of those who ambition- ally but vainly assumed that she could be stricken from that once glorious confederation of equal sovereign States which, as embla- zoned on our flag, but emblazons our Union and proclaims its inviolability.

Let this be done, and then will Alabama, in- viting to her embrace and to her affections all who come to her as citizens seeking a new home, and drawing closer to her heart those whom she has long cherished as her children, by the development of the wondrous treasures of her hidden wealth, make a joyous reality for the beautiful poetry of her name. There all will indeed rest in peace and happiness; not only the new comer, but the old master and his former slave, now a fully enfranchised free- heart the memory that it was to Ulysses S. Grant, with much of their ancient affection, and

more than their former prosperity. Each will then be independent of the other, except in those things in which we never can with safety be independent of each other—I mean in the offices of charity, those golden ligaments which never gall by their oppression.

"A Government to be beloved must first be lovely," is a true and wise saying which it becomes all to heed. It inculcates a lesson by not learning which the Government of England has engendered in the generous hearts of Irishmen a hate so intense as to defy the efforts of a better statesmanship to eradicate. There is no hatred so defiant to the assaults of policy as that which is traditional with a people. The father's quarrel is often strengthened and intensified in the hearts of his children. This can be accounted for by causes which are most philosophical. Time will cure many things, but there are some diseases too obstinate for even the remedies so bountifully supplied from that inexhaustible laboratory of cures. Among these diseases are those chiefly whose chronic character is confirmed by transmission to successive generations. The old Carthaginian who made his son to swear ever to hate and defy the Roman power, understood how impregnable is the stronghold of an hereditary hatred in the human heart. Let us avoid these examples, illustrating as they ever have, and ever will, the criminality of those who so act as to inspire them, and the utter ruin of those who are so unhappy as to be tempted to the indulgence of the terrible passions which they inculcate.

Mr. Speaker, in the character I have given of the people of the State which I have the honor in part to represent, you will find a faithful portraiture of the people of Georgia. Alabama and Georgia are sister States, lying side by side. The beautiful river which finds its sources on the plains of northern Georgia also fertilizes the valleys of my own State and washes the bases of the hills in which reposes her inexhaustible mineral wealth. The same sun which quickens by his genial rays the seed planted by the farmer of Georgia gilds with beauty the mountain-tops of Alabama. The people of the one State have all the generous and noble qualities which distinguish the people of the other. And as I speak what I know when I say that by no State will the lives, the property, and the civil and political rights of all men be more inviolably maintained than by the State of Alabama, if permitted to govern herself through rulers chosen from her own citizens of intelligence and moral worth, so also, from the best information I have received in regard to the true condition of Georgia, from trustworthy sources outside of the circle of politicians who are arrayed against each other in this unhappy contest, I cannot doubt that better for Georgia, better for the whole country, it is our duty to give to that State the republican form of government guaranteed by the Constitution, which can only be assured by the

untrammelled expression of the will of her people. Give also to Georgia that equal place in the Union to which she is entitled, and from which she has been so long unjustly excluded. But in welcoming her back to the Union, bid her come clothed with all the insignia of freedom and all the rights of a free State. Leave not upon her a single memorial to tell of the chains by which she has been too long manacled. Efface, if possible, every memento of her great offending and of her greater but undeserved humiliation.

A single remark in reference to the partisan aspects of this question, and I will have done. It is my experience, Mr. Speaker, that if we would arrive at just conclusions on subjects as momentous as that under consideration, our best sources of information are not to be found with those whose personal relations are too closely identified with such subjects. Although I frankly confess that my views of the policy which it will best become us to adopt in regard to Georgia are nearly accordant with those who oppose the purposes which the present Governor of that State has labored so earnestly and by such expensive methods to induce Congress to adopt, it is neither to the many folios of pamphlets issued by Governor Bullock nor, in any controlling sense, to those who oppose the views, sinister or otherwise, of that person that I have looked for the information which has determined my judgment of the facts which make up the record of this case. It is chiefly upon information obtained from private citizens of respectability and character residing in Georgia that I have formed my judgment. Mr. Bullock I have never personally known, nor do I expect ever to know him. But having read the pamphlets with which he has so frequently regaled us from the prolific press of his favorite though expensive chronicler in Washington, I have come to the conclusion that it is more than probable had Mr. Bullock never seen the State of Georgia the peace and happiness of the people of that State would have been much better assured.

I believe that but for Governor Bullock, who, though a Northern man, was, as I am credibly informed, a rebel in the late war, and therefore not unnaturally an intense Radical if Radical at all since the war, not only would Georgia long ago have been restored to the Union and peace and order have been maintained throughout her borders, but millions of dollars would have been saved to the people of the whole country, now overburdened by debt and taxation. Mr. Bullock may not be that unscrupulous bad man whom we sometimes encounter, who is a pest and a nuisance to any community in which he may be placed, but I hesitate not to say that it would have been better for Georgia, better for the whole country, it is our duty to give to that State the republican form of government guaranteed by the Constitution, which can only be assured by the

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 744 520 7